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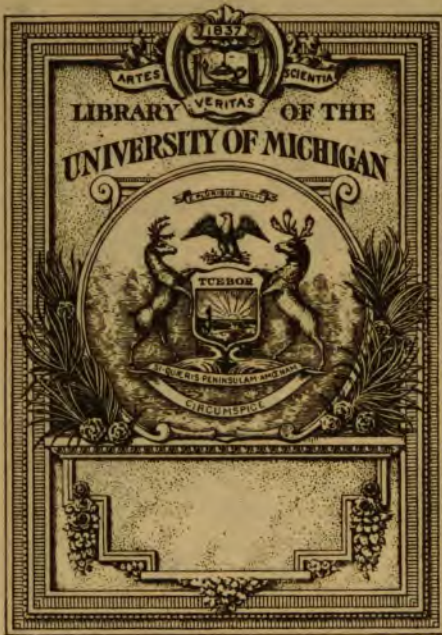
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## Victoria

June 20, 1837

June 20, 1897

### I

The lark went up, the mower whet his scythe,  
On golden meads kine ruminating lay,  
And all the world felt young again and blithe,  
Just as to-day.

### II

The partridge shook her covey from her wings,  
And limped along the grass; on leaf and lawn  
Shimmered the dew, and every throat that sings  
Chanted the dawn.

### III

The doe was followed by her new-dropped  
fawn,  
And, folding all her feathers on her breast,  
The swan within the reed-mace deep withdrawn  
Dreamed on her nest.

## IV

In the green wheat the poppy burst aflame,  
Wildrose and woodbine garlanded the glade,  
And, twin with maiden Summer, forth there  
came  
A summer Maid.

## V

Her face was as the face of mid-June when  
Blossoms the meadowsweet, the bindweed  
blows :  
Pale as a lily first She blenched, and then  
Blushed like a rose.

## VI

They placed a Crown upon her fair young brow,  
They put a Sceptre in her girlish hand,  
Saying, "Behold! You are Sovereign Lady now  
Of this great Land!"

## VII

Silent She gazed, as one who doth not know  
The meaning of a message. When She broke  
The hush of awe around her, 'twas as though  
Her soul that spoke.

## VIII

“ With this dread summons, since 'tis Heaven's  
decree,

I would not palter, even if I could ;  
But, being a woman only, I can be  
Not great, but good.

## IX

“ I cannot don the breastplate and the helm,  
To my weak waist the sword I cannot gird,  
Nor in the discords that distract a Realm  
Be seen or heard.

## X

“ But in my People's wisdom will I share,  
And in their valour play a helpful part,  
Lending them still, in all they do or dare,  
My woman's heart.

## XI

“ And haply it may be that, by God's grace,  
And unarmed Love's invulnerable might,  
I may, though woman, lead a manly race  
To higher height ;

## XII

“ If wise will curb disorderly desire,  
The Present hold the parent Past in awe,  
Religion hallowing with its sacred fire  
Freedom and Law.

## XIII

“ Never be broken, long as I shall reign,  
The solemn covenant 'twixt them and me,  
To keep this Kingdom, moated by the main,  
Loyal yet free.”

## XIV

Thus with grave utterance and majestic mien  
She with her eighteen summers filled the  
Throne  
Where Alfred sate : a girl, withal a Queen,  
Aloft, alone !

## XV

But Love that hath the power to force apart  
The bolts and baulk the sentinels of Kings,  
Came o'er the sea, and in her April heart  
Folded his wings.

## XVI

Thenceforth more dear than diadem She owned  
A princely helpmate, sharer in her trust,  
If not her Sceptre :—since, withal, enthroned  
By Time the just.

## XVII

Scorner of wrong, and lover of the right,  
Compounded all of nobleness he seemed,  
And was indeed the perfect gentle Knight  
The poet dreamed.

## XVIII

So when the storm of wrath arose that drave  
Scared Rulers from their realms, Her  
Throne, deep laid  
In liberty and trust, calm shelter gave  
To Kings dismayed.

## XIX

And stronger grew the bond of love and grace  
Betwixt Her and her People, while that She  
Reigned the glad Mother of a Royal race,  
Rulers to be.